



MULTI-ITEM HOLDER DEVICE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 This invention relates to devices for displaying essentially flat, relatively lightweight photographs, cards, artwork, electronic screens, and/or decorative items.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Collecting has become an ingrained part of the American culture. Some of the best known types of collectibles are playing cards and sports trading cards. Because collectibles are, naturally, often valuable, there has developed an industry offering numerous products which can protect collections in a manner that is considered at the same time both professional and inexpensive. However, the concept of "protection" within this industry is generally
15 considered synonymous with "storage." The majority of protective means and devices that have been made available to consumers for their collections, whether expensive or inexpensive, have been designed to protect items in secured, non-readily-visible storage. The emphasis on protection has not, to the contrary, been geared towards providing for the showcasing of collectibles for easy viewing on a wall, for example, the way that posters and artwork are
20 typically displayed. Collection holders/protectors, ranging from cheap to expensive, are most commonly designed with the intention that collectible items will be stored in drawers, closets or safes. In the event that actual display of a collection is desired, a collector will usually go to a professional frame-maker and make a large financial investment in a display frame or case.

One of the primary disadvantages of this method, apart from the obvious high cost, is that these usually custom-made display frames and cases most often only showcase a few of the choicest items in a collection. For instance, in the case of a trading card collection, only the most valuable or attractive cards are usually placed under one solid sheet of glass or
5 protective-coated translucent plastic and these can not easily be re-arranged without taking apart the professionally made frame/case which is characteristically not designed to be opened.

While it is true that some inexpensive card display systems do exist in the form of transparent vinyl sheets having pockets to hold cards, these have distinct disadvantages as they:
a) entirely encase, and therefore cover, the card making viewing of the card less aesthetically
10 pleasing; b) limit to a pre-determined and fixed number (usually 9, 12, or 16) the number of cards that can be inserted into the sheet pockets; c) are not designed to form an attractive, inter-linking display of the pockets which would permit an entire, large collection to be showcased in a professional manner; d) are fixed in size, which means that: in the instance when a card is much smaller than the pocket size, these sheets offer an unattractive display, and
15 in the instance when the card is even just slightly larger than the pockets, the sheets become entirely useless. Such card display sheets, moreover, are generally entirely unsuited to displaying other collectibles, such as photographs, since conventional sizing of trading cards and, for instance, photographs, is different.

The primary alternate option for displaying cards and photographs, is the traditional
20 push-pin/thumbtack & cork bulletin-board method. Yet another display alternative is the traditional affixing of tape or supposedly “removable” poster tack/gum to the card or photograph which subsequently gets applied directly onto a wall. Most collectors find these methods to be bad for both the wall and/or for the display items themselves. Magnets are also

relied upon to hold display items, but their use is almost exclusively confined to refrigerators or magnetically-painted walls. Magnets have the disadvantage that they cover a portion of the image in an unsightly manner. The same is true for another method which has gained slightly in popularity during the past decade—but only slightly—that being a rigid-backed board in conjunction with criss-crossing ribbons into which, typically, photographs are displayed. The disadvantages of covering a portion of the display item is significant since important information may be obscured.

None of the prior art recognizes the need to solve the problem of displaying multiple items, potentially items of differing sizes, and particularly, of displaying multiple items in manner that does not significantly limit the number of display items; none of the prior art discloses integrally molding an increased slope to increase tension useful towards increasing the holding pressure exerted on display item(s); none of the prior art discloses the advantage of having a transparent upper plate to provide an unobscured view of the display item(s); obviously, the application of prior art towards multi-item displays has never been conceived of prior to the object of this invention, otherwise its commercial success already would have been established.

In U.S. Patent 6,018,849 to ROYER, an improved device for grasping and holding together a group of papers is disclosed which is specifically designed for holding together a group of papers in the manner of a traditional paper clip. This clip offers on one sole section for grasping papers. Moreover, one of the objects indicates that Royer was only addressing his device towards groups of papers and the need to have the edges of the papers aligned flush to each other, on top of another. An object of the subject invention states that it is to provide an improved device for grasping together otherwise loose papers in a manner so that the sides and

top of edges of paper members are substantially aligned and even with one another. Royer does not justify the reasoning behind which such an effect is desirable, but it may be inferred that the application of the object of this invention was not for display. The reason for this inference is that most often papers grouped together are for storage, which only makes sense since any papers following the top sheet are not usually visible.

U.S. Patent Number 5, 179,765 to SUNGBERG discloses the concept of a paper clip as a key ring item. Considering that few people typically walk around holding their keys with papers dangling for their key ring, and further, considering that even one or two keys would be too heavy for the pressure of the clip to maintain its contact with papers to which the keys and clip would be attached, this invention seems particularly impractical. As a per-clipping item separate and apart from its use in coordination with a key-ring concept, this clip notion is entirely obvious to one skilled in the art.

U.S. Patent Number 5,544,436 to LEFKOWITZ discloses an apparatus for simultaneously displaying a plurality of photographs, pictures, cards, and the like. However, as is typical of prior art in this field, the number of display panels are fixed in a relatively expensive frame.

U.S. Patent Number 6,490,818 to BRAMHALL discloses a frame having moveably sliding "carriers" which slide within a framework. The number of display panels, in this prior art invention are fixed in a relatively expensive frame.

There is a need for an inexpensively produced device which can display items including, but not limited to, trading cards, playing cards or photographs, electronic viewscreens, or most any other type of relatively thin item to be displayed in an attractive manner; one which can accommodate virtually any size display item, and that can hold a potentially limitless number of

display items without damaging the items in ways the push pins/thumb tacks and tape do, and also which will not obscure the item being held. In addition, there is a need for a device/system which requires only basic instructions in order for it to be easily used.

These and other objects and advantages of the invention will become more apparent
5 from the following detailed description and claims.

SUMMARY AND OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a device/system which provides for the easy and inexpensive
10 displaying of items such as, but not limited to, artwork, trading cards, photographs and electronic viewscreens. An object of this invention is to provide a device/system which is/are simple and inexpensive to manufacture.

Another object of this invention is to provide a simple-to-use device/system requiring little training to use, yet which still affords a uniform, professional display appearance,
15 paramount among which is the characteristic that the display items are aligned to one another by means of an alignment guide.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a device/display system which permits substantially the entire image of the item(s) being displayed to be seen. One means of achieving this result is through the use of a transparent holding element which affords an
20 unobscured view of the display item being held.

Yet still another, further object of this invention is to provide for the potentially unlimited number of display items to be interconnected.

A still further, additional object of this invention is to provide a display device which can be “set-up” and taken down relatively easily and quickly and which may be easily transported.

A yet still further object of this invention is to provide a display system which can be
5 relatively easily secured to a wall or other such display area without damage to item or wall.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a view of a rectangular embodiment with four “gripping” areas and center tack hole;

10 FIG. 2 is a view of a circular embodiment with four “gripping” areas and center tack hole, and
insertable grip-enhancing aid having broken lines to indicate that it is slipped inside;;

FIG. 3 is a detailed view of a rectangular embodiment showing two separated plates, four
“gripping” areas, and a center tack hole;

FIG. 4 is a side view indicating how the preferred embodiment of the invention of this disclosure
15 employs two “plates” which are centrally connected, with the anterior plate angled and
having rounded edges providing for the easy insertion between it for a display item.

FIG. 5 is an overview frontal view of how an embodiment of this invention may be used;

FIG. 6 is a view indicating how essentially flat display item can be gripped;

FIG. 7 is a separated view of two pieces which fit together using a helix formation and
20 which become closer together through a rotational tightening process;

FIG. 8 are views of how a display item may be inserted and held in place in a manner
in which the card may be visible through transparent material holding it;

FIG. 9 discloses a device with four interior spaces to accommodate card insertions which
tapers-off at the center making the fit tighter, thereby enhancing the grip action;

FIG. 10 discloses a device with four interior spaces to accommodate the insertion of display items and a tack hole having smooth, perpendicular interior sides to guide display item insertions;

FIG. 11 is a side view of another embodiment disclosing flanking display items being held;

5 FIG. 12 is a view of another embodiment shown holding a display item;

FIG. 13 is a view shown without a display item being held;

FIG. 14 is an underneath view of the back of an embodiment without a tack hole;

FIG. 15 is a side view of an embodiment's "pressure arm" alone;

FIG. 16 is a side view of an embodiment's "pressure arm" as it contacts the holder portion;

10 FIG. 17 is a fuller side view of an embodiment;

FIG. 18 discloses two top views of embodiments having "re-positionably sticky" areas

and shows two different options for removable "sheeting", and each has a

primarily anterior "plate" with only a minor "front" plate which forms a "shelf"

for holding display items and keeping them aligned;

15 FIG. 19 discloses two top views of embodiments having "re-positionably sticky" areas

with the removable "sheeting" removed.

FIG. 20 is a top view showing the process of how display items are precisely aligned

to each other using the device of this invention;

FIG. 21 a top view of display items held by the device of this invention;

20 FIG. 22 is an anterior view of single or double-sided sticky area(s) to affix to a wall;

FIG. 23 is an anterior view of single or double-sided sticky area(s) in contact with display items

and disclosing a magnet for affixing to a metallic painted or metallic wall or refrigerator;

FIG. 24 is a top view of a spring-loaded embodiment;

- FIG. 25 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment open and being loaded;
- FIG. 26 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment being loaded an closing;
- FIG. 27 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment closed, with interior spring;
- FIG. 28 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment open with interior spring and display item;
- 5 FIG. 29 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment closed with interior spring and display item;
- FIG. 30 is a top view of an embodiment;
- FIG. 31 is a side view showing an embodiment that tapers;
- FIG. 32 is more of an exploded view showing an embodiment that tapers;
- FIG. 33 is more of an exploded view showing an embodiment that tapers;
- 10 FIG. 34 is a side view of the embodiment of FIG. 30;
- FIG. 35 is an anterior view of one method for holding a device together slightly differently by string or rubberbands;
- FIG. 36 is an anterior view of another method for holding a device together slightly differently by string or rubberbands;
- 15 FIG. 37 is a frontal view of the embodiment of FIG. 35;
- FIG. 38 is a side view of the embodiment of FIG. 35;
- FIG. 39 is a perspective view of an anterior plate with a smooth surface;
- FIG. 40 is a layered, perspective view of a “sticky faced” frontal plate with peel away cover sheet and magnet on its reverse side and a peel-away sticky sheet on the magnet;
- 20 FIG. 41 is a top view of a transparent frontal plate, and a textured face of an anterior plate;
- FIG. 42 are perspective views of devices with texturized and smooth anterior plates with sloping gradations & tack holes;
- FIG. 43 is a perspective view a sloping anterior plate with magnet and sticky back;

FIG. 44 is a perspective view of the layers when in a final, assembled device;

FIG. 45 is a perspective view of an embodiment of this invention holding card-like items;

FIG. 46 is a perspective view of an embodiment of this invention holding card-like items;

5 FIG. 47 is a perspective view of another embodiment of this device;

FIG. 48 is a perspective view of another embodiment of this device;

FIG. 49 is a perspective view of yet another embodiment permitting the joining of

a front and back plate at a hub without glue or sonic welding;

FIG. 50 is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG 49 uniting the two plates at the

10 center by pushing down on the protruding center of the anterior plate;

FIG. 51 is a frontal view of two devices showing how the embodiment of FIG 48 may be used;

FIG. 52 yet another embodiment means for holding flat items in which the top and/or side

holders can be broken away to form a clean edge;

FIG. 53 is a perspective view of a back plate of clamp-like clip with a tack hole;

15 FIG. 54 is the embodiment of FIG. 53 without tack hole and holding a card-like display item;

FIG. 55 is an embodiment similar to FIG. 53 which can hold three (3) card-like display items;

FIG. 56 is a perspective view of an embodiment capable of displaying eight (8) items;

FIG. 57 is a frontal view of an embodiment capable of displaying eight (8) items;

FIG. 58 is a side view of an embodiment of FIGS. 56 and 57.

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Front Plate 22	Raised Guide Edge 32
Tack Hole 24	Glue Cover 34
Back Plate 26	Glue 36
Back Plate Tack Hole 28	Magnet 38
Tapered Edge 30	Insertable Grip-Enhancing Aid 40

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In a preferred embodiment, the front plate **22**, is formed of a transparent, entirely flat, planar sheet of a colorless plastic. This provides for a viewer to see through front plate **22** to the display item(s) which can have little, if any, of its area otherwise obscured. Back Plate **26** can be made of most any type of material, but is preferably of the same material as that of the Front Plate **22** to offer Back Plate **26** a superior bond with Front Plate **22**. A central hole, Tack Hole **24**, is made, for instance, through an integral injection-molding process, or it may be drilled or made with a tool with an industrial steel pointed pin. Tack Hole **24** should be wide enough to easily accommodate the insertion of a traditionally sized thumbtack. Tack Hole **24** may be obviated, if so desired, in other embodiments in which, for example, the center area of the device may display a stamped/embossed/etched/imprinted corporate and/or brand logo.

If the invention of this device is to be manufactured through an injection molding process, prior to molding or extruding the device of this invention, a traditional, common, conventional plastic pelletized resin is obtained. One simple means for joining Front Plate **22** and Back Plate **26** is through the production process using sonic welding. Those skilled in the art of plastic injection molding and plastic assembly are already aware that this process, in which two separate pieces of plastic are integrally bonded wherever they touch, provides for an extremely fast, strong, and cost effective means for joining two pieces of plastic. This manner permits a relatively strong bonding of two separate pieces of plastic without the use of glue. Of course, glue may also be used as an alternative to joining two pieces of plastic.

Back Plate **26**, preferably, has Tapered Edge **30** to allow for the more easy insertion of display items. Raised Guide Edge **32** serves to create an “envelope” effect in-between the two

sandwiching Front and Back Plates **22** and **26**, thereby creating a space suitable to accommodate the insertion in-between of display items. Raised Guide Edge **32**, further, serves as the joining points of between Front and Back Plates **22** and **26** in the sonic weld joining process, in that Front and Back Plates **22** and **26** only meld together along the points at which
5 they touch, which are along the “crossed” Raised Guide Edge **32**.

While the preferred embodiment of the present invention has been described and illustrated, it is understood by one skilled in the art that the preferred embodiment is capable of variation, addition, omission and modification without departing from the spirit an scope of the invention.